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SUBJECT: 63RD UNGA GENERAL DEBATE MARKED BY CALLS FOR
SOLIDARITY

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The 63rd UN General Assembly (UNGA) General Debate took place September 23-29, with 111 Member States addressing the Assembly. The overarching theme was a call for collective action to address the global financial, food, environment and energy crises and reinvigorate efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Most speakers emphasized the need for poverty eradication and UN reform -- whether in response to the PGA's call for Members to do so or because those issues aligned with their own priorities is unclear -- but offered few concrete proposals to address these issues. Despite recent global events in Georgia and elsewhere, the tone of the Debate remained relatively conciliatory, with predictable exceptions. Some Member States lauded U.S. development assistance and peace-keeping efforts, while the usual crowd (i.e., Iran, Venezuela, the DPRK, and Cuba) delivered anti-U.S. vitriol. President of the General Assembly (PGA) d'Escoto delivered markedly toned-down opening and closing remarks to the Debate following his incendiary remarks to open the 63rd General Assembly (Reftel). It remains to be seen if the relatively balanced and collaborative tone of the General Debate augurs for significant progress on key issues as the 63rd UNGA committee meetings commence. END SUMMARY.

WHA: GROWING DISCONTENT WITH CAPITALISM

¶2. (U) While most speakers throughout the General Debate touched upon the financial crisis, none were as critical as the Central and Latin American speakers. The first speaker, Brazil's President Lula, set the tone with a impassioned call that "We must not allow the burden of the boundless greed of a few to be shouldered by all." The Central and Latin American leaders sharply criticized capitalist policies, which they viewed as favoring speculation and directly causing the financial crisis. They called for greater oversight of the markets and for more socially-responsible economic policies. Immigration was a central theme, with calls for greater protection of immigrants' rights and reunification of families split by immigration laws, as well as open borders for migrant workers. Cuba labeled the United States a "threat to international security," and accused it of legalizing torture and holding innocent persons in "concentration camps." Opening by stating that "the religion of neoliberalism has failed," Venezuela chastised the United States for its "fundamentalist" leadership and "neoliberal" policies, which the speaker said had resulted in the ruling class swindling millions of "brothers and sisters." Bolivia accused the United States of interfering in its internal affairs. Without referring explicitly to the United States, Ecuador blasted the alleged use of torture and clandestine imprisonment of suspected terrorists, stressing that the fight against terrorism could not be used as an excuse to disregard international law. Perhaps most surprising was Honduras' intervention, which was markedly more critical of

capitalist policies than in previous years, making Honduras yet another at least rhetorical convert to the Hugo Chavez-led "social democracy" movement in the region. All of the Caribbean states echoed financial concerns but also called for urgent international action on climate change to which they attribute the devastating hurricanes that have ravaged their small island states.

WESTERN EUROPE: UNITED UNDER FRENCH EU LEADERSHIP

¶3. (U) The Western European speakers focused on several common themes, calling for greater international cooperation in countering the effects of the food, financial, and energy crises and of climate change. They emphasized the need for increased efforts to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East, Africa, and the Caucasus, expressing their support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. More than speakers from any other region, the Western European leaders underscored the importance of respecting human rights and called upon Member States to adhere to the principles outlined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, with Spain and the Netherlands calling for universal elimination of the death penalty. In one of the strongest speeches of the General Debate, French President Nicolas Sarkozy asserted Europe's desire to be a world leader in many global issues. Notably, he proposed the establishment of a continent-wide "economic space" to foster a partnership between Europe and Russia. The UK solicited global support for the United States as it worked to stabilize its financial markets.

EASTERN EUROPE: DEBATING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

¶4. (U) Unsurprisingly, many eastern European countries voiced concerns about Russian activity in the region. Georgian President Saakashvili pointed out the global security implications of the conflict over South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In one of the most well written speeches of the General Debate, the Lithuanian President said, "Nations of the former Soviet Union still have to fight against the revisionism seeping down from the Kremlin towers." Estonia also denounced Russia by name. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov justified his country's actions in Georgia, by indicting the failed "uni-polar" approach of the anti-terrorism coalition. Russia defended the concept of having spheres of influence. Speakers frequently asked the international community to support their country's view of regional security and territorial disputes, including, Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, almost all of the eastern European countries called for greater regional and multilateral cooperation to overcome the "frozen conflicts" that create instability and endanger international security.

THE MIDDLE EAST: IRAQ, THE PEACE PROCESS, AND LEBANON

¶5. (U) Stability and peace in Iraq remain a concern, with several Middle Eastern countries expressing support for continued efforts to improve security and restore Iraq's regional role. Iraq called on the international community to bolster its efforts to combat terrorism and strengthen diplomatic missions in Iraq. Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many countries urged a peaceful, comprehensive solution to creating a Palestinian state. Israel encouraged both to live "side-by-side" in peace and the Palestinian territories advocated a two-state solution, using the 1967 borders. On Lebanon, several countries lauded the elections and subsequent creation of a national unity government. Lebanon requested the international community stop Israel's threats of war against it. Of a more flagrant nature were remarks by Iran and Syria. Iran argued that Iraq was attacked under false pretenses and the United States opposes other nations'

progress. Syria blamed the United States for creating an "abominable" humanitarian situation in Iraq and questioned the efficacy of the Annapolis talks.

AFRICA: FOOD AND ENERGY CRISES, CLIMATE CHANGE, UN REFORM

16. (U) The main topics African countries highlighted were the effects of the following: the food and energy crises on poverty reduction, food subsidies on developing-country exports, and climate change on food and energy shortages. Ugandan President Museveni noted that high food prices benefited African farmers. Several countries also called for ending the U.S. "embargo" against Cuba and some supported Taiwan participation in UN activity. A large number called for reform of the Security Council, often with specific references to the AU position advocating two permanent seats with veto power and five non-permanent seats. Noteworthy remarks include: South Africa calling on Zimbabwe to finalize its power-sharing agreement; Mauritania justifying its position following the August coup d'etat; Somalia requesting assistance from the international community to combat piracy; and Senegal insisting that extremism and intolerance were contrary to Islam. There were several interventions of a particularly objectionable nature. Zimbabwe accused the U.S. of committing "genocide" in Iraq. Sudan insisted that Darfur was its responsibility and "foreign conspiracies that threaten peace," were, in fact, seeking regime change. Eritrea claimed that the United States deliberately fomented conflict to exert its control through "misguided and domineering policies."

SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA:
COUNTERING TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

17. (U) Many speakers highlighted the need to fight terrorism with political will, popular support and economic strategy. Several countries called for increased investment in Afghanistan's development, describing how Afghan conflict affects the region. The Indian Prime Minister welcomed democracy in Pakistan and said his country was committed to working on the dispute over Jammu Kashmir. Afghan President Karzai called Pakistan's elections "promising," while highlighting border security issues in the context of international terrorism. Pakistani President Zardari highlighted the price Pakistan has paid for the war against terror and declared that a democratic Pakistan is reaching the national consensus necessary to confront and defeat the

terrorists. The SCA countries also argued for prioritization of progress toward the MDGs, particularly the need for water and investment in energy infrastructure.

EAST ASIA: FOCUS ON ECONOMICS, DPRK AND CLIMATE CHANGE

18. (U) Asian countries discussed the deleterious impacts of the global food, energy and financial crises on their economies. Many called for deeper regional integration to temper the turbulence of global financial markets. Australia offered its own suggestions for addressing the financial crisis. China proclaimed its development success the result of reforms and opening its economy - trends it pledged to continue. Japan, which is preparing a draft resolution, and Australia reiterated calls for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. They were joined by others from the region in focusing on the need to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Japan, Korea, Australia and Cambodia were among the countries urging the DPRK to uphold its commitments and continue progress through the Six-Party Talks. The DPRK, meanwhile, justified its recent freeze on dismantling its nuclear facilities by blaming the "U.S. insistence on unilateral inspection" which it claimed violated its sovereignty and fell outside of agreements reached through the Six-Party Talks. The DPRK lashed out against the United States as "the worst peacebreaker and human rights violator

in the world," and blamed the Republic of Korea and Japan for failing to redress historical grievances. Pacific island nations appealed for countries to redouble efforts to address climate change and rising sea levels - which they maintain threaten the security of their people - and sought support for a GA resolution calling for Security Council review. Burma claimed that "unjust" sanctions are preventing it from becoming the region's rice bowl and a reliable energy source. Wolff